

An Introduction

“Stand up Straight and let me inspect your uniform. Everything must be crisp and sharp. Your uniform is a reflection of yourself.” The Commander barked at the new Lt. The Commander seemed notably stressed and on edge. This made the Lt nervous. He was used to working with over the top superiors. It almost seemed as if it was an unwritten criteria that had to be met to be in the higher ranks amongst the Empire. The Lt began to notice some other peculiar things in the room. The floors were immaculate and not a spot of dust on anything. The chairs, tables, desks, even the papers were placed in perfect order. Someone had clearly just had a field day with the room. “Maybe some troopers got into trouble again. They must have been punished with a field day and restriction. It was the start of the week. The barracks gets a little rowdy on the weekends on the lower decks” the Lt thought to himself. The Commander was now sitting at the watch desk reading logs from the evening before. He seemed...agitated, sweat actually beginning to accrue above his brow. He was combing the watch logs furiously but methodically. “Some sort of inspection I wonder”..

Just then the blast doors opened and the Commander immediately snapped to attention. This actually startled the Lt but he did as well, ensuring he followed the lead of his superior. Due to where the Lt was standing, he couldn't actually see who walked in, ensuring his thousand yard stare wouldn't wander. It would be seen as poor military bearing if he was to attempt to look in that direction, and clearly this was very important. Your uniform and bearing are the first things superiors notice when you meet them for the first time. A bad first impression can dig a hole that the new Lt certainly didn't want to be in. The footsteps of the individuals broke through the Lt's deep thought. The individuals would soon be in peripheral view and he was anxious to see who had just entered.

They soon came into view. Chrome black uniforms adorned with trims of red, the uniforms flawless as if they had never been worn. There were two of them and the very way they walked seemed rigid and precise. Each footstep echoed off of the metal floor as the boots appeared to look almost like chromium only black as night. Truly people of importance. You could feel it and see it in the way they carried themselves, the abnormality though being they were still wearing their helmets. The helmets were truly sinister, the black plating also adorned in trims of red, but the eyes were crimson and bright. The young Lt had seen this before. “ISB..” he said in his head almost gasping to himself. The ISB had a reputation of being an absolutely ruthless entity within the Empire. Always precise, coldly calculated and never faltering, a true weapon of the Empire. However since the fall and tragedy of Endor, they were a rare thing to see. It was no secret that they were trying desperately to regroup and establish a new order.

The leading agent removed their helmet and addressed the Commander “Good morning Commander, I trust everything is ready and our request have been accommodated?” The Lt still could not see the rank of the agent but it was clear they possessed the seniority in the room. “Of course. Your Ties are being cleaned and inspected as we speak. I also have the ship watch logs and the INPR you requested as well as my own. When should we expect the transport?” The Commander responded but his tone was a bit odd. You could feel the tension in the air and almost audibly hear the weariness of his voice. “Is there an issue Commander? You seem a bit tense? How can we make you more comfortable?” The ISB agent had also picked up on it. The Lt's eyes widened as it was

almost perceived as rude the way the ISB agent asked the question. Surely not.... The Commander was noticeably flustered and embarrassed with the question. "Of course not! Everything is as requested, I simply was curious about what time to expect his arrival." The Commander responded.

"Ahh I see. Well he will arrive after our checks are in order. I wouldn't want you to be nervous around us as we are just Lt's doing our job" The Agent responded. "Lt's?!" He thought to himself. The Lt standing at attention was shocked. He couldn't believe that a Commander, much less his, would be so noticeably on edge due to a lower ranking member of the Empire. Is this truly the authority and reputation of the ISB? The fact that a mere Lt would inspire so much respect and authority. The ISB Agent turned towards the Lt. "Ahh and you must be our lucky Pantoran. It is nice to put a name to face." He approached the Lt swiftly and stood in front of him. His eyes clearly looking him up and down. However after a few glances, their eyes met...and they didn't break. This put the Lt on edge. "Exceptional uniform, and quite the bearing. Your Commander should be proud to have you. Did I miss something?" The Agent turned to the other one. The other Agent had been in the room the entire time and had not spoken a word. Their helmet was still on and they were staring at the Lt. Just then the crackled response from the helmet came. "No. The subject did not move a muscle nor did their eyes wander. Confidence is the appearance displayed, but the subjects heart rate reads otherwise." The voice coming from the second agent was monotone and direct. The Lt didn't say a word remembering not to speak unless spoken to, but he was floored at the fact that the other agent had been sizing him up the entire time.

"You are cheating SB-301. I do however appreciate your attention to detail. Now take your helmet off so that our Lt here knows his heart rate is his own business." The Agent sneered. SB-301 removed their helmet. He was Pantoran just like the Lt. . He had gold tattooed on his face showing he also came from an aristocratic bloodline. A scar was noticeable across his face, deep running from the left side of his forehead down to the right side of his chin. He smiled at the Lt. "I had to meet a fellow Pantoran like myself. It is excellent to continue to see such pride and patriotism from Orto Plutonia." There was a long pause as it was clear it was now the Lt's turn to speak. "Likewise." Was all he said. The first agent spoke again introducing himself. "Where are my manners, I am SB-207, and this is SB-301. We are with the ISB. We have someone who would like to meet you. It is our job to ensure that there wont be any complications or issues with this meeting." The Lt was stunned. Who on earth would want to meet him that was so important the ISB was there to screen him or the entire ship for that matter?

Before the Lt could even react, SB-207 turned to the Commander, who had been patiently waiting and still very much at attention. "Could you please pass me his INPR as well as yours. Also...at ease. We don't need anyone passing out in here as it would be dreadfully inconvenient...for the both of us." The Commander relaxed...well maybe by appearance but certainly not in his mind. He approached the ISB agents carefully and handed over the ships logs and two INPR's. The Lt began to feel squeamish and his palms became clammy. Every sense he had became heightened in his nervousness. He could smell the stale and still air in the cabin and his sweat accruing was getting cold due to the ships blasting hospitality systems. He could feel every fiber of his uniform, the scratchy coarseness of the service uniform he wore against his blue skin. His anxiety skyrocketed as he watched the eyes of the two agents dart back and forth as they read the INPRs.

“Well it would seem everything is in order.” SB-207 said calmly. A sense of relief flooded the Lt. “I suppose its time to head to our meeting. Commander I believe its time to have everyone at their quarters. This is Mandatory and is not a request but an absolute. SB-301 and myself will be escorting our Pantoran here to this meeting.” The Commander looked surprised. “A quarters call...now? Topside will be notably displeased.” The Commander had a face of slight frustration, but you could hear in his tone that it was much more than that. “Well then... I suppose I could let your guest know that his demands were far too demanding. In fact, now that I think about it, perhaps I misheard him. SB-301 did he say quarters call or Battlestations?” The Commanders eyes widened and his face flushed red. SB-301 sharply chimed in “now that you mention it...I do believe it WAS a Battlestations call.” A sneer curled on his face. “Well that settles it then! Battlestations it is. Im sure He would love to see the power and prowess of this ISD when it is at fully operational manning!” SB-207 was smiling ear to ear.

The Lt. felt incredibly awkward standing between this conversation. His hairs were raised on the back of his neck and his heart was racing once again. A moment of comfortability was immediately squashed. He feared his Commander would resent him for seeing him be utterly used and humiliated like this. It was a shocking revelation to see that the ISB had so much authority and power. The fact a mere Lt was making orders an entire ISD had to follow. Those thoughts led to a much bigger question that was looming in the back of his head. “Who in this galaxy am I meeting?” He thought to himself.

“Well then, I would never want to display the wrong message, we can absolutely do a Battlestations call...but that’s 100% manning...including my Lt.” He pointed at the Lt and snickered back. The Lt was beginning to feel like he was standing in the middle of a battlefield. The cold sweat ran down his back as he realized he was being used by his commander like a pawn in a game. This really discouraged the Lt as he felt his leadership was going to use him to prove a point. He would not get a chance to meet this mystery person. He just wanted this to stop. Suddenly he noticed the body language of both ISB agents had changed. Subtly but very noticeable. Their faces became stiff and their eyes narrowed. You could hear a pin drop in the room, the only sound being the hospitality system blowing and troopers walking in the passageway outside the room. SB-207 stepped forward. He had not spoken much in the room only addressing the Lt and responding to SB-301, yet a powershift occurred. “Do you think this is a game? Perhaps you are not aware of the gravity of what is taking place. He is ALREADY here. There is no shuttle. He is waiting in in the conference room. A better question Commander is, by the way you are speaking to us now, it’s leading me to believe that you are in charge. Do you feel in charge?”Silence.

The Lt was so uncomfortable he could burst and the tension was suffocating in the room. He just wanted this to be over and was now not even sure if he wanted this meeting to occur. The Commander’s body language had become almost cowardly. His shoulders dropped and his eyes narrowed. “He is already here?” The Commander spoke softly. “Answer my question Commander, Do YOU feel in charge?” SB-301 snapped back. SB-207 had his eyes fixed on the commander, his face tense and laser focused. The Lt was seeing just how powerful and feared the ISB was...even amongst the Imperial Navy. “No...I do not. I will make the call.” The Commander looked defeated and the Lt knew that the Commander would never look at him the same way. He had just seen his superior officer completely neutered. It was impressive and terrifying at the same time. The commander reached for the PA pad and made the call. “This is Commander Lawrence, Battlestations...now.”

It took only a few moments before the lights went red in the cabin room, followed by the deafening cadence of the Imperial siren alert. "You are dismissed Commander" SB-207 said. The Commander quickly...but loudly trudged out of the cabin. You could hear his boots stomping all the way down the passageway...but now it was just the Lt and the two Agents. This was unbelievably irregular to see this behavior. The Lt was floored.

The Lt was in shock at what he had just witnessed. So many questions racing through his mind and he feared what to do next. These agents were not to be trifled with and they meant business. The Lt felt like he was going to suffocate. "Well then...now that that's over. I see you are quite the pilot!" SB-207 said. The Lt waited for the awkward pause to see if he was supposed to respond. Good thing he didn't. "Your record here indicated quite the military training. Ace at Skystrike! In one of our personal favorites...the Bomber. I also see you have been recommended for the Defender as well. Very prestigious platform amongst pilots. You have many other...talents as well it would seem. I can see now why he wants to meet you." The Lt couldn't bear it any longer. He had to ask, it was eating him alive. "Sir, if I may ask, who exactly am I meeting?" SB-207 grinned "Well it would seem you do talk! Good. We were starting to think you were one of the strange types... to answer your question...its best you don't know until you meet him. That is the way he wants it!"

The Lt was frustrated but he didn't show it. This was much more serious than he could have ever imagined. He woke up that morning expecting to meet a Commodore or something and possibly receive an award for his flight skills. This was obviously much more serious and the person he was meeting was incredibly influential. "It's time to go, make us Pantorans proud!" SB-301 grinned. The Lt's heart dropped. They all began to exit the cabin but just before they left, the Agents donned their helmets again. The door zipped open...the lights all red and the ship buzzing with activity as the Battlestations call was still underway. Troopers and officers swiftly moving through the Passageways and doing the standard operating procedures for their positions. The two Agents walked on the sides of the Lt. The Lt felt like he was walking in place, he had tunnel vision as his mind raced. The anxiety was causing him to shake and all of his senses were going wild almost overloading his mind. He felt like he was going to be sick but step by step he held it together. He was so locked into his own mind he was not even sure if the Agents were speaking to him or what was going on. All he could hear was the sound of the Imperial Alert siren and the clanging of his boots on the metal floors.

They rounded a corner and The Lt saw the conference room. This time it was different...where the normal stormtrooper guard stood there were Death Storm Troopers. All Standing at attention not moving a muscle and completely unphased by the BattleStations drill occurring around them. The Door of the conference room also had a Flag draped above it. Jet black with the Imperial Insignia in a deep red. They began their long walk to the door...but suddenly the Lt noticed something massive outside the windows of the hallway. An ISD...multiple...but one was different than the others. This one was clearly painted with a design. The Lt had never seen or heard of anything like this before. He had seen ISD's of all types but never one with specific markings. With the escort it received, it was clearly a Flagship...

"This is SB-207 we are arriving with the asset." The Agent suddenly said into his transmitter. The Death storm troopers snapped to attention immediately. Not a sound could be heard other than the Siren going, the hallway was suddenly clear of anyone who worked on the Lt's ship. Only the Troopers, the Agents, and himself. It was as if the section of the ship was now deserted. SB-301 turned to him "He is waiting for you inside. Goodluck to you.

We will be here when you are done.” The crackled audio coming from his helmet sounded formidable. The Lt was finally there, right outside the door of whoever this “HE’ was. It was hard to breath and his mind was Screaming. His palms sweating profusely, his nose picking up every smell in that ship and his body shaking. The Lt held his breath and approached the blast doors to the conference room. They swiftly opened startling the Lt as he was on edge. He stepped in and the room was incredibly bright. The hallways had been dark due to the Battlestations procedures with only red lights to light the way. The shutters were wide open and the sun from the world they were stationed at beamed into the room. It was blinding...but his eyes adjusted. He heard a voice...across the room. It was calm and cool, strangely comforting. The Lt panicked though! In his head, he had not heard what the figure had said. He could scream he was so frustrated. “What a great first impression...I didn’t even hear what the guy said because I’m too busy trying not to piss my pants.” The Lt thought to himself.

It was silent...the pause was getting longer and the Lt had to say something...he took a breathe and responded. “ I apologize sir but I did not hear what you have said. Please say again?” The figure turned slowly. He was dressed in a beautiful white dress uniform. He was decorated in so many medals the Lt was surprised he could stand up straight in his uniform. The brass and chrome reflecting the light of the sun. It was magnificent to see. As he was turning he noticed the blue skin “ahhhh a fellow Pantoran! This could work to my advantage!” The Lt excitedly said to himself softly. The figure continued to turn and something was different...he was not Pantoran...his face was so calm and relaxed yet intense. The real thing that stuck out though...were the red eyes. He spoke again and the words were commanding yet comforting.

“So...I hear they call you Cronch? You will have to tell me that story. You have no idea how many people confuse us.”

“Us sir?” Cronch replied confused.

“Yes. Our races. You are Pantoran. I am Chiss.”

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